

## PRE-DELIVERY SUMMARY

### President Saakashvili, in Landmark Speech, Announces Bold Democratic Reform Agenda & National Political Dialogue

Monday, 20:00 Tbilisi

In the landmark address of his second term, President Mikheil Saakashvili announced a series of bold reforms over 100 days and an innovative nationwide dialogue that will set priorities for a “new wave of democracy” (*speech excerpts on page 2*). Among other actions, the Government will advance:

- Direct elections of mayors and early local elections in May 2010;
- A new electoral code, new electoral commission, and the selection of the electoral commission head by broad consensus of all political parties (*by October*);
- Consensus selection of the head of Georgia’s public broadcasting board (*within 90 days*);
- New constraints on presidential powers;
- Stiff penalties for interference in judicial cases (*by late September*);
- Nationwide consultations leading to a consensus on 5 governing priorities (*August/September*);
- Parliament plenary sessions in Kutaisi, to bring the political process closer to the regions.

President Saakashvili said the government’s dialogue with the opposition and the public will expand. But he underscored that swift measures are needed to meet the needs of citizens and to ensure the democratic reforms that will enable Georgia to emerge stronger than ever.

“I frankly feel that this process of dialogue and reform is moving too slowly,” he said. “The people cannot wait. The reforms cannot wait. Georgia cannot wait.”

Citing the difficult situation confronting the nation, the President emphasized that, “The only way to address all these challenges is a continual opening of our political system, a renewed commitment to strengthen our democratic institutions, an acceleration of the reform process.”

#### Critical Reforms Announced

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President Saakashvili announced measures that “move the discussion from the conceptual to the concrete, from general ideas to specific commitments and deadlines.” The measures include:

- **Electoral Reform:** direct election of mayors; consensus appointment of the head of the Central Election Commission; the establishment by October of a new electoral code and commission; early local elections in May 2010.
- **Constitutional Reform:** new limits on presidential powers and stronger checks and balances.
- **Judicial Reform:** stricter sanctions for contact with judges about pending cases, and new powers to the judiciary to investigate attempts to improperly influence cases; the introduction of jury trials.
- **Media Reform:** restructuring of the public broadcasting board so that four of its nine seats are controlled by the opposition, four by the government, and the final seat is occupied by a civil society representative; expansion of nationwide satellite licenses to additional TV stations (Maestro T, the broadcaster most critical of the Government, was recently granted such a license).
- **Extended NSC Meetings:** extended meetings of the National Security Council to include opposition leaders and civic society, beginning this month.

#### The National Dialogue Initiative

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The President acknowledged concerns among Georgians about the pace of democratic reforms. In response, he announced consultations with the Georgian people on their top priorities for the nation:

- Starting tomorrow, government officials will travel to towns, districts and villages to hear from Georgians about their priorities for their life, their environment, and their region. In addition to cabinet ministers and Members of Parliament from all parties will be invited to participate.
- These priorities will be synthesized by the end of September into five major objectives that will serve as the government’s roadmap for the next three years.



## Key Excerpts from President Saakashvili's Speech

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**I have come here today to tell you that the only way to address all our challenges and capitalize on our opportunities, my fellow citizens, is a continual opening of our political system, a renewed commitment to strengthen our democratic institutions, and an acceleration of the reform process.**

*Nevertheless, I frankly feel that this process of dialogue and reform is moving too slowly. The people cannot wait. The reforms cannot wait. Georgia cannot wait.*

**I want to move the discussion from the conceptual to the concrete—from general ideas to specific commitments and deadlines.**

*Today, I want to suggest that the Constitutional Commission should specifically take up the idea of further limits on the ability of the President to dissolve Parliament, in order to increase its independence.*

**Today I want to propose increasing sanctions for anyone, including government officials, who contacts any judge or judicial employee about a pending court case, and that we give the judiciary new powers to investigate and punish anyone who tries to improperly influence cases from the outside.**

*I also propose that we change the structure of the public broadcasting board so that among its 9, there will be a 4-to-4 balance between government and opposition members, with the ninth seat to be occupied by a civil society representative. In this way, at no time can anyone say that the government majority imposes its broadcasting policies against the wishes of opposition parties.*

**Therefore, I am announcing that starting this month, we will establish a monthly process of extended meetings of the National Security Council in which opposition leaders and civic society organizations will be participating in the government's deliberation on security issues and foreign policy.**

*When I committed to starting a process of dialogue, I intended not only a dialogue with politicians, but also with the people. A dialogue not only with the minority that has demonstrated in Tbilisi. But also a dialogue with the 95% of Georgian citizens in every region who work hard and struggle to care for their families and deserve to be listened to, even if they don't block roads or institutions, even if they are not politically organized.*

**I call as well on MP's from the parliamentary opposition to join us in this historic national initiative, as well as any political force that will be genuinely willing to participate.**

*From the end of July to August 30th, you will, all of you - workers, peasants, winemakers, teachers, pensioners, unemployed people, students - define your priorities, locally and nationally.*

**5 top priorities will be defined locally everywhere by the Georgian citizens. Then a national synthesis of these priorities will be released by the end of September.**

*5 big trends will emerge nationally, 5 main areas of reforms. This will be the roadmap of my government for the next three years.*

**Dialogue with political parties is important and it will continue. But we must begin to make the dialogue real, by implementing the kind of specific reforms I laid out today. And we must also broaden the dialogue to ensure we are listening to the wishes of the people of Georgia.**

*These materials are distributed by The Glover Park Group on behalf of the Government of Georgia. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.*

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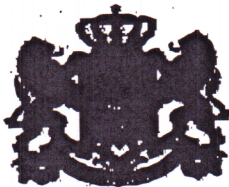
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2009 MAY 22 AM 8:31  
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№ 6/20-01  
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2009 MAY 22 AM 8:11  
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Dear Senator:

I am writing on an urgent basis with regard to the funding for Georgia included in the Fiscal Year 2009 Supplemental Appropriations legislation that the Senate is considering this week. Given Georgia's significant and enduring needs following the invasion of Russian forces last August, I respectfully request your support for the funds requested by President Obama to assist in our ongoing recovery efforts.

Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008 had a devastating impact on our people, economy, infrastructure and security. Much of our infrastructure was destroyed, the economy was severely destabilized, and thousands were left homeless. To this day, Russian forces continue to occupy a substantial part of Georgia in violation of international agreements, and the Russian government recently announced that it will deploy additional forces to patrol artificial borders within our sovereign territory.

In response to the severe hardships resulting from the August invasion, both President Bush and then-Senator Obama called for a \$1 billion emergency assistance package for Georgia, which was much appreciated by our people as they began the difficult recovery work required by our dire circumstances. We were also extremely grateful for the swift effort by the United States Congress last September to secure the initial installment of these funds, which was of critical importance in our nascent recovery efforts.

President Obama's recent request for the balance of funds committed to Georgia – a total of \$242.5 million – was a welcome statement that the United States continues to stand by our people as we seek to address unmet recovery needs and the enduring challenges posed by occupying forces. If approved, these funds will help my government address urgent requirements identified by the World Bank's recent Joint Needs Assessment, including the resettlement of internally displaced persons, and will allow us to rebuild vital infrastructure in key sectors of our society and economy. The proposed funding will also contribute to the further strengthening of our democratic institutions, border security and law enforcement capabilities, which are also of immediate importance as we proceed with an ambitious reform agenda despite continuing external pressures.

In light of the above, I hope you and your colleagues will support President Obama's request as you consider funding for Georgia in the pending Supplemental Appropriations legislation. My government and our citizens deeply appreciate your consideration of this important matter, and your support for our joint commitment to Georgia's swift and successful recovery.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Batu Kutelia

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